

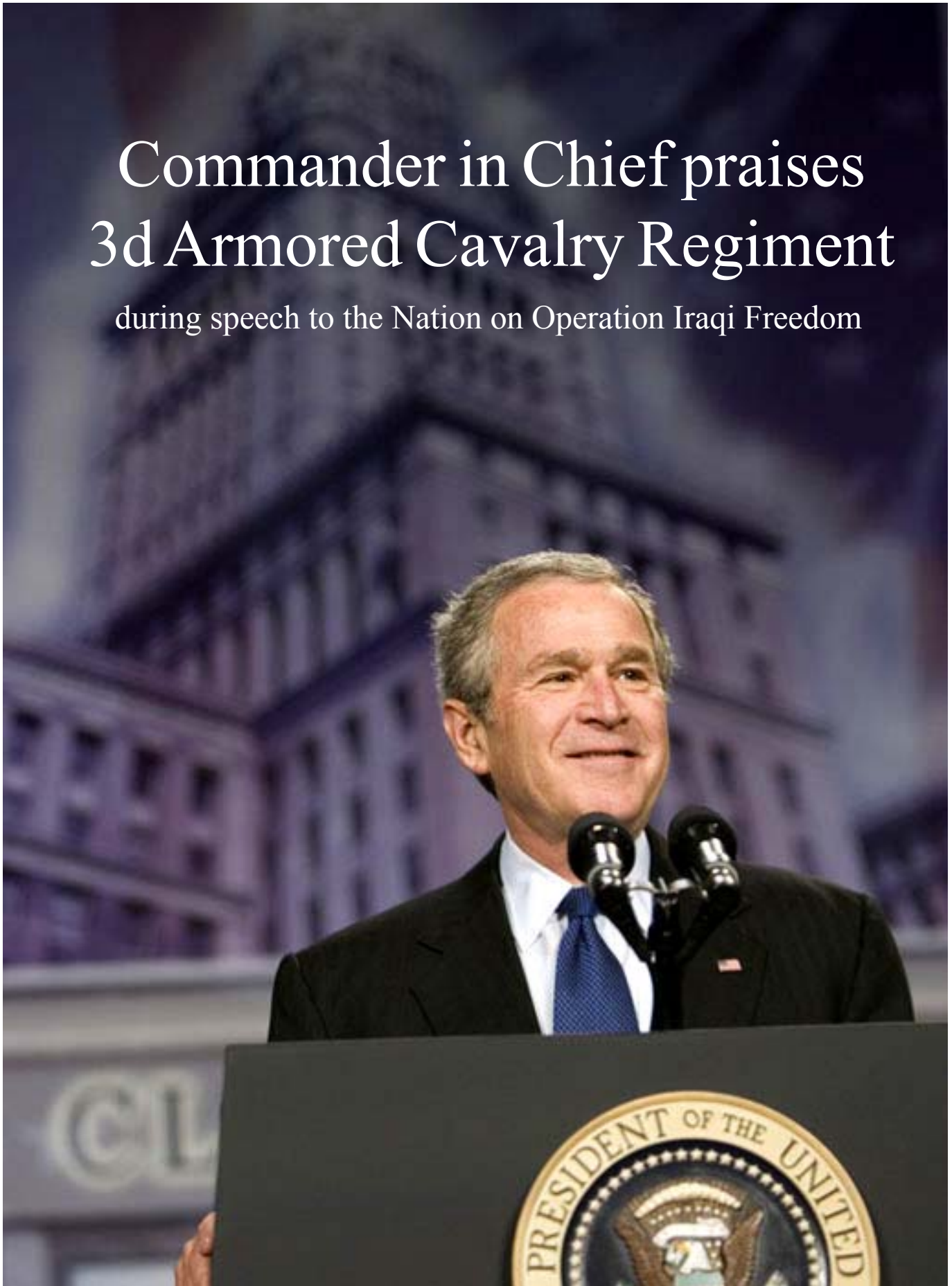




**3d Armored
Cavalry Regiment
Operation
Iraqi Freedom III**

Commander in Chief praises 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment

during speech to the Nation on Operation Iraqi Freedom



I'd like to share a concrete example of progress in Iraq that most Americans do not see every day in their newspapers or on their television screens.

I'm going to tell you the story of a northern Iraqi city called Tal Afar, which was once a key base of operations for al Qaeda and is today a free city that gives reason for hope for a free Iraq.

Tal Afar is a city of more than 200,000 residents, roughly the population of Akron, Ohio. In many ways Tal Afar is a microcosm of Iraq. It has dozens of tribes of different ethnicity and religion. Most of the city residents are Sunnis of Turkoman origin.

Tal Afar sits just 35 miles from the Syrian border. It was a strategic location for al Qaeda and their leader, [Abu Musab al-]Zarqawi.

Now, it's important to remember what al Qaeda has told us — their stated objectives. Their goal is to drive us out of Iraq so they can take the country over. Their goal is to overthrow moderate Muslim governments throughout the region. Their goal is to use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America.

To achieve this goal, they're recruiting terrorists from the Middle East to come into Iraq, to infiltrate its cities, and to sow violence and destruction, so that no legitimate government can exercise control.

And Tal Afar was a key way station for their operations in Iraq. After we removed Saddam Hussein in April 2003, the terrorists began moving into the city. They sought to divide Tal Afar's many ethnic and religious groups and forged an alliance of convenience with those who benefited from Saddam's regime and others with their own grievances.

They skillfully used propaganda to foment hostility toward the coalition and the new Iraqi government. They exploited a weak economy to recruit young men to their cause.

AND BY SEPTEMBER 2004, the terrorists and insurgents had basically seized control of Tal Afar. We recognized the situation was unacceptable so we launched a military operation against them. After three days of heavy fighting, the terrorists and the insurgents fled the city. Our strategy at the time was to stay after the terrorists and keep them on the run. So coalition forces kept moving, kept pursuing the enemy and rooting out the terrorists in other parts of Iraq.

Unfortunately, in 2004, the local security forces there in Tal Afar weren't able to maintain order, and so the terrorists and the insurgents eventually moved back into the town.

Because the terrorists threatened to murder the families of Tal Afar's police, its members rarely ventured out from the headquarters in an old Ottoman fortress.

The terrorists also took over local mosques, forcing local imams out and insisting that the terrorist message of hatred and intolerance and violence be spread from the mosques.

The same happened in Tal Afar schools, where the terrorists eliminated real education and instead indoctrinated young men in their hateful ideology.

By November of 2004, two months after our operation to clear the city, the terrorists had returned to continue their brutal campaign of intimidation.

The return of al Qaeda meant the innocent civilians in Tal Afar were in a difficult position.

Just put yourself in the shoes of the citizens of Tal Afar as all this was happening.

On the one side, you hear the coalition and Iraqi forces saying they're coming to protect you. But they'd already come in once and they had not stopped the terrorists from coming back. You worry that when the coalition goes after the terrorists, you or your family may be caught in the crossfire and your city might be destroyed. You don't trust the police. You badly want to believe the coalition forces really can help you out, but three decades of Saddam's brutal rule have taught you a lesson: Don't stick your neck out for anybody.

On the other side you see the terrorists and the insurgents. You know they mean business. They control the only hospital in town. You see that the mayor and other political figures are collaborating with the terrorists. You see how the people who work as interpreters for the coalition forces are beheaded.

You see a popular city councilman gunned down in front of his horrified wife and children. You see a respected sheik and an imam kidnapped and murdered.

YOU SEE THE TERRORISTS deliberately firing mortars into playgrounds and soccer fields filled with children. You see communities becoming armed enclaves. If you're in a part of Tal Afar that was not considered friendly, you see that the terrorists cut off your basic services like electricity and water. You and your family feel besieged and you see no way out.

The savagery of the terrorists and insurgents who controlled Tal Afar is really hard for Americans to imagine. They enforced their rule through fear and intimidation, and women and children were not spared.

In one grim incident, the terrorists kidnapped a young boy from the hospital and killed him, and then they boobytrapped his body and placed him along the road where his family would see him. And when the boy's father came to retrieve his son's body, he was blown up.

These weren't random acts of violence. These were deliberate and highly organized attempts to maintain control through intimidation.

In Tal Afar, the terrorists had schools for kidnapping and beheading and laying [improvised explosive devices]. And they sent a clear message to the citizens of the city: Anyone who dares oppose their reign of terror will be murdered.

As they enforced their rule by targeting civilians, they also preyed upon adolescents craving affirmation.

Our troops found one Iraqi teenager who was taken from his family by the terrorists. The terrorists routinely abused him and violated his dignity. The terrorists offered him a chance to prove his manhood by holding the legs of captives as they were beheaded.

When our forces interviewed this boy, he told them that his greatest aspiration was to be promoted to the killer who would behead the bound captives.

Al Qaeda's idea of manhood may be fanatical and perverse, but it serves two clear purposes: It helped provide recruits willing to commit any atrocity and it enforced the rule of fear.

The result of this barbarity was a city where normal life had virtually ceased.

Colonel H.R. McMaster of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment described it this way: "When you come into a place in the grip of al Qaeda, you see a ghost town. There are no children playing in the streets. Shops are closed and bordered. all construction is stopped. People stay inside, prisoners in their own homes."

This is the brutal reality that al Qaeda wishes to impose on all the people of Iraq.

The ability of al Qaeda and its associate and its associates to retake Tal Afar was an example of something we saw elsewhere in Iraq. We recognized the problem and we changed our strategy.

Instead of coming in and removing the terrorists and



then moving on, the Iraqi government and the coalition adopted a new approach called clear, hold and build. This new approach was made possible because of the significant gains made in training large numbers of highly capable Iraqi security forces.

Under this new approach, Iraqi and coalition forces would clear a city of the terrorists, leave well-trained Iraqi units behind to hold the city, and work with local leaders to build the economic and political infrastructure Iraqis need to live in freedom.

One of the first tests of this new approach was Tal Afar. In May, 2005, Colonel McMaster's unit was given responsibility for the western part of Nineveh province, where Tal Afar is located. And two months later, Iraq's national government announced a major offensive to clear the city of terrorists would soon be launched.

Iraqi and coalition forces first met with tribal leaders and local residents to listen to their grievances. One of the biggest complaints was the police force, which rarely

COMMANDER IN CHIEF

ventured out of its headquarters. When it did venture, it was mostly to carry out sectarian reprisals.

And so the national government sent out new leaders to head the force. The new leaders set about getting rid of the bad elements and building a professional police force that all sides could have confidence in.

We recognized it was important to listen to the representatives of Tal Afar's many ethnic and religious groups. It's an important part of helping to remove one of the leading sources of mistrust.

Next, Iraqi and army coalition forces spent weeks preparing for what they knew would be a tough military offensive.

They built an eight-foot high, 12-mile long dirt wall that ringed the city. This wall was designed to cut off any escape for terrorists trying to evade security checkpoints.

Iraqi and coalition forces also built temporary housing outside the city so that Tal Afar's people would have places to go when the fighting started.

Before the assault on the city, Iraqi and coalition forces initiated a series of operations in surrounding towns to eliminate safe havens and make it harder for fleeing terrorists to hide.

These steps took time. But as life returned to the outlying towns, these operations helped persuade the population of Tal Afar that Iraqi and coalition forces were on their side against a common enemy, the extremists who had taken control of their city and their lives.

Only after all these steps did Iraqi and coalition authorities launch Operation Restoring Rights to clear the city of the terrorists.

Iraqi forces took the lead. The primary force was 10 Iraqi

battalions backed by three coalition battalions.

Many Iraqi units conducted their own anti-terrorist operations and controlled their own battlespace, hunting for the enemy fighters and securing neighborhoods block by block.

Throughout the operation, Iraqi and coalition forces were careful to hold their fire to let civilians pass safely out of the city.

By focusing on securing the safety of Tal Afar's population, the Iraqi and coalition forces began to win the trust of the city's residents which is critical to defeating the terrorists who are hiding among them.

After about two weeks of intense activity, coalition and Iraqi forces had killed about 150 terrorists and captured 850 more.

The operation uncovered weapons caches loaded with small arms ammunition and ski masks, RPG rockets, grenades, machine-gun ammunition and fuses and batteries for making [improvised explosive devices].

In one cache, we found an axe inscribed with the names of the victims the terrorists had beheaded. And the operation accomplished all this while protecting innocent civilians and inflicting minimal damage on the city.

After the main combat operations were over, Iraqi forces moved in to hold the city. Iraqis' government deployed more than 1,000 Iraqi army soldiers and emergency police to keep order. And they were supported by a newly restored police force that would eventually grow to about 1,700 officers.

As part of the new strategy, we embedded coalition forces with the Iraqi police and with the army units patrolling Tal Afar to work with their Iraqi counterparts and to help them become more capable and professional.

“We recognized it was important to listen to the representatives of Tal Afar's many ethnic and religious groups.”



“The example of Tal Afar gives me confidence in our strategy because in this city we see the outlines of the Iraq that we and the Iraqi people have been fighting for.”

In the weeks and months that followed, the Iraqi police built stations throughout Tal Afar, and city residents began stepping forward to offer testimony against captured terrorists and inform soldiers about where the remaining terrorists were hiding.

Inside the old Ottoman fortress, a joint coordination center manned by Iraqi army and police and coalition forces answers the many phone calls that now come in through a new tip line. As a result of the tips, when someone tries to plant an [improvised explosive device] in Tal Afar, it's often reported and disabled before it can do any harm.

The Iraqi forces patrolling the cities are effective, because they know the people, they know the language and they know the culture. And by turning control of these cities over to capable Iraqi troops and police, we give Iraqis confidence that they can determine their own destiny, and that frees up coalition forces to hunt high-value targets like Zarqawi.

The recent elections show us how Iraqis respond when they know they are safe. Tal Afar is the largest city in western Nineveh province. In the elections held in January 2005, of about 190,000 registered voters, only 32,000 people went to the polls. Only Falluja had a lower participation rate.

By the time of the October referendum on the constitution and the December elections, Iraqi and coalition forces had secured Tal Afar and surrounding areas. The number of registered voters rose to about 204,000 and more than 175,000 turned out to vote in each election, more than 85 percent of the eligible voters in western Nineveh province.

It came only after much trial and error. It took time to understand and adjust to the brutality of the enemy in Iraq.

Yet the strategy is working. And we know it's working because the people of Tal Afar are showing their gratitude for the good work that Americans have given on their behalf.

A recent television report followed a guy named Captain Jesse Sellers on patrol and described him as a pied piper with crowds of Iraqi children happily chanting his name as he greets locals with the words “Salam alaikim” which means, “Peace be with you.”

When the newswoman asked a local merchant what would have happened a few months earlier if he'd have been seen talking with an American, his answer was clear: “They would have cut off my head; they would have beheaded me.”

Like thousands of others in Tal Afar, this man knows the true meaning of liberation.

Recently, Senator Joe Biden said that America cannot want peace for Iraqis more than they want it for themselves. I agree with that.

And the story of Tal Afar shows that when Iraqis can count on a basic level of safety and security, they can live together peacefully.

We saw this in Tal Afar after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra.

Unlike other parts of Iraq, in Tal Afar, the reaction was subdued, with few reports of sectarian violence. Actually, on the Friday after the attack, more than 1,000 demonstrators gathered in Tal Afar to protest the attack peacefully.

The terrorists have not given up in Tal Afar. And they may yet succeed in exploding bombs or provoking acts of sectarian violence.

The people of the city still have many challenges to overcome, including old-age [sic] resentments that still create suspicion, an economy that needs to create jobs and opportunity for its young, and determined enemies who will continue trying to foment a civil war to move back in.

But the people of Tal Afar have shown why spreading liberty and democracy is at the heart of our strategy to defeat the terrorists.

The people of Tal Afar have shown that Iraqis do want peace and freedom. And no one should underestimate them.

“Savage acts of violence”

I wish I could tell you that the progress made in Tal Afar is the same in every single part of Iraq. It's not. Though most of the country has remained relatively peaceful, in some parts of Iraq the enemy is carrying out savage acts of violence, particularly in Baghdad and the surrounding areas of Baghdad.

But the progress made in bringing more Iraqi security forces on-line is helping to bring peace and stability to Iraqi cities. The example of Tal Afar gives me confidence in our strategy because in this city we see the outlines of the Iraq that we and the Iraqi people have been fighting for. A free and secure people who are getting back on their feet, who are participating in government and civic life, and who have become allies in the fight against the terrorists.

I believe that as Iraqis continue to see the benefits of liberty, they will gain confidence in their future and they will work to ensure that common purpose trumps narrow sectarianism.

And by standing with them in their hour of need we're



going to help the Iraqis build a strong democracy that will be an inspiration throughout the Middle East, a democracy that'll be a partner in the global war against the terrorists.

The kind of progress that we and the Iraqi people are making in places like Tal Afar is not easy to capture in a short clip on the evening news. Footage of children playing or shops opening and people resuming their normal lives will never be as dramatic as the footage of an [improvised explosive device] explosion or the destruction of a mosque or soldiers and civilians being killed or injured.

The enemy understands this, and it explains their continued acts of violence in Iraq. Yet the progress we and the Iraqi people are making is also real, and those in a position to know best are the Iraqis themselves.

The mayor of Tal Afar

One of the most eloquent is the mayor of Tal Afar, a courageous Iraqi man named Najin. Mayor Najin arrived in the city in the midst of the al Qaeda occupation, and he knows exactly what our troops have helped accomplish.

He calls our men and women in uniform "lionhearts." And in a letter to the troopers of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, he spoke of a friendship sealed in blood and sacrifice.

As Mayor Najin had this to say to the families of our fallen: "To the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones. Their sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead but alive, and their souls are

hovering around us every second of every minute. They will not be forgotten for giving their precious lives. They have sacrificed that which is most valuable. We see them in the smile of every child and in every flower growing in this land.

"Let America, their families and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life."

America is proud of that sacrifice and we are proud to have allies like Mayor Najin on our side in the fight for freedom.

Yesterday we marked the third anniversary of the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. At this time there's much discussion in our country about the removal of Saddam Hussein from power and our remaining mission in Iraq.

The decision to remove Saddam Hussein was a difficult decision. The decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision.

Before we acted, his regime was defying U.N. resolutions calling for it to disarm. It was violating cease-fire agreements, was firing on American and British pilots which were enforcing no-fly zones.

Saddam Hussein was a leader who brutalized his people, had pursued and used weapons of mass destruction and sponsored terrorism.

Today, Saddam Hussein is no longer oppressing his people or threatening the world. He's being tried for his crimes by the free citizens of a free Iraq, and America and our allies are safer for it.

OPERATION Res



A U.S. soldier and Iraqi soldiers pass a intersection in downtown Tal Afar during routine security patrols. Iraqi Army Security Forces with assistance from the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment are providing security for the region of Tal Afar in order to disrupt insurgent safe havens and to clear weapons cache sights in the area of operation.

RESTORING RIGHTS

TERRORISTS DRIVEN FROM TALL AFAR IN JOINT COMBAT MISSION WITH IRAQI ARMY



In late August, the Regiment began Operation Restoring Rights. Prior to the operation in August, Al Qaeda in Iraq attempted to reinforce their efforts in Tall Afar.

A prominent Al Qaeda in Iraq website proclaimed that the “Lions of Tall Afar” would never surrender this stronghold and promised to repel all Coalition and Iraqi Army attempts to regain control of the city.

The purpose of Operation Restoring Rights was to defeat the insurgency in Tall Afar so that the enemy could no longer intimidate and coerce the local population, and destroy the enemy base of support used to conduct attacks across Western Ninewa Province and Iraq.

The Iraqi Army and the Regiment’s troopers aimed to separate the enemy from the population and set conditions for the reconstitution of the police in Tall Afar.

Shaping operations for Operation Restoring Rights began with area reconnaissance in outlying communities where the enemy was attempting to escape the impending assault on the city.

The Regiment then established an eight foot high wall around Tall Afar under the advice of the Iraqi Army, to contain the enemy in Tall Afar. The Regiment integrated 10 Iraqi Army and Police battalions – over 5,500 Iraqi soldiers and police — into operations in and around Tall Afar.

These forces included a battalion from the 2nd Iraqi Army Division from Irbil, an Iraqi Special Forces company, a Commando Brigade, the Mosul Emergency Police Battalion, and six battalions from the 3rd Iraqi Army Division.

OPERATION RESTORING RIGHTS

As Sabre squadron conducted operations in Tall Afar, Tiger Squadron conducted reconnaissance from the western region moving east towards Tall Afar from multiple directions.

Tiger Squadron conducted a relief-in-place with Sabre Squadron and assumed control of the Western portion of the city – an area where the enemy conducted a campaign of sectarian cleansing and used vacated homes to set-up complex attacks on our forces.

Tiger immediately pursued the enemy and inflicted heavy losses on them. Simultaneous to Tiger's Offensive Operations in the West, Sabre Squadron conducted a deliberate attack into Eastern Tall Afar to isolate the enemy's safe haven in Sarai.



Members of the Iraqi Army listen to a lesson on entry control point procedures instructed by members of the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment in Tal Afar, Iraq on Sept. 15, 2005 as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The enemy suffered heavy losses at the hands of Sabre Squadron, the Iraqi Army, and the Regiment's attack and reconnaissance aircraft. After the enemy was isolated in the Sarai district, the Regiment evacuated civilians from the neighborhood through a screening site manned by Muleskinner Squadron and the Mosul Emergency Police Battalion.

During the course of this evacuation, Tiger Squadron isolated the Sarai district from the west. The Regiment gained key intelligence from civilians who wanted to regain control of the city.



OPERATION RESTORING RIGHTS



Troopers of Blue Platoon, Grim Troop, Sabre Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, taking a position in the desert outside Tall 'Afar ready to launch a massive attack on the Al'Qaeda sanctuary.

OPERATION RESTORING RIGHTS



The final attack to Suraia, the sunny stronghold in Tall'Afar , is starting at 06,30 am in Barracuda Route. Abram from the 3rd ACR are blasting the walls

OPERATION RESTORING RIGHTS



With attack aviation and precision artillery combined with effective ground reconnaissance and fires, the Regiment defeated the enemy in detail and captured them as they tried to escape. After a week of fighting, the enemy declared that they were “being slaughtered” and sought to escape by any means available.

Some dressed as women and others coerced children to walk with them. Iraqi Army and Police forces identified enemy fighters trying to escape. As the Regiment began to clear the houses of enemy in Sarai we, it was reinforced by 2-325 Airborne Infantry Regiment (The White Falcons) from 82nd Airborne Division.

This airborne infantry battalion gave the Regiment the ability to clear the remainder of the Sarai district and prevent the enemy from regaining a foothold in the area. From 24 August – 23 September, the Regiment killed over 150 enemy fighters and captured over 800.



A Cavalry scout runs for cover while Iraqi soldiers provide security in Tal Afar, Iraq. Iraqi Army Security Forces with assistance from the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tiger Squadron, Crazyhorse Troop Company enter a local residence in order to disrupt insurgent safe havens and to clear weapons cache sights in the area of operation during Operation Restoring Rights.

Forever Grateful

From Mayor of Tal' Afar Najim Abdullah Abid Al-Jibouri

In the Name of God the Compassionate and Merciful

To the Courageous Men and Women of the 3^d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who have changed the city of Tall' Afar from a ghost town, in which terrorists spread death and destruction, to a secure city flourishing with life. To the lion-hearts who liberated our city from the grasp of terrorists who were beheading men, women and children in the streets for many months.

To those who spread smiles on the faces of our children, and gave us restored hope, through their personal sacrifice and brave fighting, and gave new life to the city after hopelessness darkened our days, and stole our confidence in our ability to reestablish our city.

Our city was the main base of operations for Abu Mousab Al Zarqawi. The city was completely held hostage in the hands of his henchmen. Our schools, governmental services, businesses and offices were closed. Our streets were silent, and no one dared to walk them. Our people were barricaded in their homes out of fear; death awaited them around every corner. Terrorists occupied and controlled the only hospital in the city. Their savagery reached such a level that they stuffed the corpses of children with explosives and tossed them into the streets in order to kill grieving parents attempting to retrieve the bodies of their young. This was the situation of our city until God prepared and delivered unto them the courageous soldiers of the 3^d Armored Cavalry Regiment, who liberated this city, ridding it of Zarqawi's followers after harsh fighting, killing many terrorists, and forcing the remaining butchers to flee the city like rats to the surrounding areas, where the bravery of other 3^d ACR soldiers in Sinjar, Rabiah, Zumar and Avgani finally destroyed them.

I have met many soldiers of the 3^d Armored Cavalry Regiment; they are not only courageous men and women, but avenging angels sent by The God Himself to fight the evil of terrorism.

The leaders of this Regiment; COL McMaster, COL Armstrong, LTC Hickey, LTC Gibson, and LTC Reilly embody courage, strength, vision and wisdom. Officers and soldiers alike bristle with the confidence and character of knights in a bygone era. The mission they have accomplished, by means of a unique military operation, stands among the finest military feats to date in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and truly deserves to be studied in military science. This military operation was clean, with little collateral damage, despite the ferocity of the enemy. With the skill and precision of surgeons they dealt with the terrorist cancers in the city without causing unnecessary damage.

God bless this brave Regiment; God bless the families who dedicated these brave men and women. From the bottom of our hearts we thank the families. They have given us something we will never forget. To the families of those who have given their holy blood for our land, we all bow to you in reverence and to the souls of your loved ones. Their sacrifice was not in vain. They are not dead, but alive, and their souls hovering around us every second of every minute. They will never be forgotten for giving their precious lives. They have sacrificed that which is most valuable. We see them in the smile of every child, and in every flower growing in this land. Let America, their families, and the world be proud of their sacrifice for humanity and life.

Finally, no matter how much I write or speak about this brave Regiment, I haven't the words to describe the courage of its officers and soldiers. I pray to God to grant happiness and health to these legendary heroes and their brave families.





WITH PRAISE &



HONORS

Bravery, Strength, Determination, Correct Thought, Flexibility, Knowledge, and Impartiality.

These are the features of your Regiment's leadership that are displayed through participation with our Division Headquarters, our troops, and their units in all the daily occasions. Your wise daily, operational and successful leadership was the decisive factor in achieving victory. We noticed clearly the main features for victory in your leadership.

They are the same for each people or army who are looking for victory, and it is the common purpose of your troopers and faith in their goal along with their principles, high morals and focus of their mission, coupled with perfect logistics support and impartiality and sincere leadership that makes you the right people for this mission.

Your abilities to plan the excellent coordination - the overall supervising and the right decisive decisions along with your great leadership have helped us build up the individual Soldier and increase his abilities as well as those for the platoons, companies, battalions, brigades and division.

It is said that heaps of construction materials cannot build a house and the gathered people cannot be considered an army. Your leadership and devotion to duty have helped us form an army from the gathered people.

Your behavior and your actions have built strong friendships that will last a lifetime. Your behavior is a feature of wise leadership which is the tree and the reputation you leave behind is the shadow of the tree.

So we present our heartfelt thanks, appreciation and respect to you as we touched during this past period of cooperation and coordination and fighting side by side.

We also offer the thanks of the Division's staff, NCOs and enlisted. You will disappear from our eyes, but you will stay in our hearts. We send greetings to the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment fighters and to their families and we wish all of you to get back home safely under victory's flag.

With God's Care,

Major General Khorsheed Saleem Al-Dosekey
3rd Iraqi Army Infantry Division Commander